

HEAVY METAL: THE NCFAA NEWSLETTER (NOV. 27, 2020)

Bednarik Award – nation's defensive player of the year

Coastal Carolina defensive tackle **C.J. Brewer** (#52, Sr., Bowdon, Ga.) had a career day in the Chanticleers' first win over App State. Brewer posted a career-high 14 tackles – which is also a team-high this season – 1.5 sacks and 3.0 tackles-for-loss. His solo sack came on a third-down play that helped seal the win on the Mountaineers' last possession. The Coastal defense helped the Chants overcome a 17-9 halftime deficit and push CCU to an 8-0 record and the best start by any team in Sun Belt history. Nevada defensive tackle **Dom Peterson** (#99, Jr., Harbor City, Calif.) had three TFLs and two sacks among his four total tackles and helped nail down the Wolf Pack's 26-21 win over San Diego State. His third-down sack for minus-11 yards forced an Aztecs punt on their final possession. All three TFLs and both sacks came on third-down plays as Peterson and Nevada held SDSU to 109 rushing yards, more than 170 yards under their season average.

Biletnikoff Award – nation's outstanding receiver regardless of position

What a week it was for two of the top wideouts in the nation. Indiana's **Ty Fryfogle** (#3, Sr., Lucedale, Miss.) electrified a national audience with a seven-catch, 218-yard dazzlement against Ohio State to become the first receiver in Big Ten history to record back-to-back 200-yard games. It was the third-highest total ever for a Buckeyes' opponent and came along with TD catches of 63, 56 and 33 yards. The past three weeks Fryfogle has 25 receptions for 560 yards and six TD's. He was a midseason addition to the Biletnikoff Award Watch List. Alabama WR **DeVonta Smith** (#6, Sr., Amite, La.), a preseason Watch Lister, broke the SEC career TD's record with a pair of scores against Kentucky. Smith has 10 TD's this season, second nationally, and now 33 for his career to pass Alabama's Amari Cooper and Florida's Chris Doering on the list. Smith finished with nine catches for 144 yards, his fourth 100-yard day in the Tide's last five games. Eight of his nine receptions went for first downs. Smith is fifth nationally in yards per game (129.0) and third in receptions (9.3 pg).

Bronko Nagurski Trophy – nation's top defensive player

The FWAA honored Northwestern linebacker **Blake Gallagher** as its National Defensive Player of the Week following a 17-7 win over Wisconsin. Gallagher (#51, Sr., Raynham, Mass.) had a team-high 14 tackles, a sack, forced a fumble and had a fumble recovery in a win that gave the 5-0 Wildcats command of the Big Ten's West Division. Gallagher led the effort that didn't allow the Badgers to reach the red zone and forced five turnovers. He has made 14 tackles in two of his last three games (also Nov. 7 vs. Nebraska) and this was his 12th career game with 10 or more tackles to go with his first forced fumble. Gallagher leads Northwestern in total tackles with 48 and in tackles-for-loss with 5.5 on a defense that is fourth in the nation in scoring defense (12.6 ppg) and which is among the top 15 in seven defensive categories. Former Northwestern linebacker and current head coach Pat Fitzgerald won the Bronko Nagurski Trophy in 1995 and '96 and remains the only two-time winner of the award.

Butkus Award – nation's best linebacker

Paddy Fisher continues to climb up Northwestern's record book for career tackles. A Butkus Award Watch List member, Fisher (#42, Sr., Katy, Texas) ranks seventh all-time at the school with 364 career tackles, tops among active Big Ten players and currently the second-most of any active FBS player trailing only West Virginia's Tony Fields II (366). Last week in a 17-7 win over Wisconsin he created his 11th career forced fumble, making him the active leader in forced fumbles. His 13 tackles in that game gave him 13 career games of 10 or more tackles, the most by an active Big Ten player. He's not alone in fine linebacking in Evanston. Fisher (9th), **Blake Gallagher** (6th) and Chris Bergin (13th) each are in the top 15 in Big Ten tackles this season. All three had 10 or more tackles in wins over Iowa and Nebraska – the first time for the Wildcats to see that since 2013 – and the trio has combined for 42 percent of Northwestern's tackles this season. Gallagher (#51, Sr., Raynham, Mass.) leads Northwestern in total tackles (48) and TFLs (5.5) and along with Bergin (#28, Sr., Bloomfield Hills, Mich.) the trio are 1-2-3 on the Wildcats' tackles chart each with 43 or more. The Wildcats have shut out opponents in the second half in four of their five wins.

Davey O'Brien Award – nation's best quarterback

The Davey O'Brien Foundation announced Oklahoma's **Spencer Rattler** as its National Quarterback of the Week following a banner day in Bedlam as the Sooners beat Oklahoma State, 41-13. Rattler (#7, Fr., Phoenix, Ariz.) threw for 301 yards and accounted for all five of Oklahoma's TD's, completing 17 of 24 passes for four TD's and also scoring on a nine-yard rush. The redshirt freshman led the Sooners to TD's on their first three possessions and a 21-0 lead. His 231.2 passing efficiency rating was his best since the season-opening win over Missouri State. He has passed for 300 yards four times this season. Among freshman QB's who have played more than three games this season, Rattler leads the group in passing TD's (22), passing offense (289.9 ypg) and total offense (304.3 ypg). He is sixth in passing TD's among all QB's with three or more games played.

Doak Walker Award – nation's premier running back

Another running back topped the 1,000-yard mark last week as we wrote about here last week. **Breece Hall** of Iowa State (#28, So., Wichita, Kan.) remains the nation's rushing leader heading into Friday's games with 1,169 yards and has a 75-yard lead on the second rusher to hit the

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grand mark, UTSA's **Sincere McCormick** (1,094). McCormick (#3, So., Converse, Texas) had a record-setting 173-yard day in a 23-20 win at Southern Miss, breaking the school's single-season rushing record on a 69-yard TD dash in the third quarter. He's already passed the 2,000-yard mark in his short career. He's topped 100 yards five times this season. Hat tip to Buffalo RB **Jarret Patterson** (#26, Jr., Glendale, Md.) for his school-record 301 yards and four TD's in a 42-17 win at Bowling Green. Patterson carried 31 times and averaged 9.7 yards per carry, had a 67-yard run to add to TD runs of 17, 4, 15 and 57 yards. Second hat tip to Oregon State RB **Jermar Jefferson** (#6, Jr., Harbor City, Calif.), who broke off a 75-yard TD run on the Beavers' first play en route to a 196-yard day on only 18 carries in a 31-27 win over Cal. Jefferson's 10.9-yards per rush was also sparked by a 65-yard run in the fourth quarter. He's the Pac-12's active rushing leader with 2,514 career yards with 25 career TD's going into this weekend's game against rival Oregon.

Heisman Trophy – nation's most outstanding player

Time to check in again on Ohio State QB **Justin Fields**, as if you might have missed him in the highlight packages last week. Fields (#1, Jr., Kennesaw, Ga.) rang up 378 yards of total offense last week – a career high – with 300 through the air and an OSU career-high 78 rushing yards with three TD's. Fields has a near-80 percent completion rate with more than 1,200 yards and 13 TD's through the air, is fourth in the nation in QB efficiency (202.10) and ninth nationally in total offense generating 335.8 yards per game. He's leading one of the country's most potent offenses coming off the Buckeyes' 607-yard output in a win over Indiana. The Buckeyes lead the Big Ten in scoring (45.3 ppg), total offense (535.3 ypg) and rushing offense (233.3 ypg) and are third in passing (302.0 ypg).

John Mackey Award – nation's most outstanding tight end

We have mentioned Florida's outstanding tight end **Kyle Pitts** a handful of times in this space this season, noting his smashing start to the season that spurred him to be the country's TE-leader with eight TD catches so far. Today we tout another tight end who has now matched those eight TD's out west in BYU's **Isaac Rex**. The redshirt freshman (#83, Fr., San Clemente, Calif.) has made the most of his 24 receptions, taking a third of them for scores. Rex is the son of former BYU All-American tight end Byron Rex (1986, 1989-92) and is best in short yardage with his 11.29-ypc average. Five of his eight TD's have come on throws at the five-yard line or closer, and he has three two-TD games including the past two weeks against North Alabama (3-20, 2 TD's) and at Boise State (5-45, 2 TD's). Rex's 30.1 ypg average won't grab headlines, but it will for opponents who already have plenty to worry about with BYU WR's Dax Milne (100.7 ypg) and Gunner Romney (88.5 ypg) running into the secondary. Now they must contain perhaps an even bigger situational threat underneath in Rex.

Lou Groza Award – nation's top placekicker

The Palm Beach County Sports Commission recognized three kickers as its Stars of the Week. Pitt kicker **Alex Kessman** took over the national lead in made field goals after a big 47-14 win over Virginia Tech. Kessman (#97, Sr., Clarkston, Mich.) was 4-for-4 on field goals including a pair of long-range makes from 53 and 52 yards. Kessman's 18 makes on the season include an FBS-best four from at least 50 yards. He has made 12 of 18 long-distance attempts in his career, the best percentage in NCAA history among kickers with at least 15 tries from that range. His 17 points scored against the Hokies was a career best. USC got a big boost from **Parker Lewis** in its big 33-17 win at Utah last week. Lewis (#48, Fr., Phoenix, Ariz.) hit FG's of 47, 43, 36 and 24 yards and scored all of the Trojans' second-half points, adding three PAT's for a 15-point game. Lewis leads USC in scoring with 29 points. Cincinnati kicker **Cole Smith** (#17, So., Middletown, Ohio) hit all three FG attempts in a big 36-33 win at UCF that kept the Bearcats undefeated after eight games for the first time since 2009. Smith hit from 47, 26 and 22 yards.

Maxwell Award – nation's player of the year

Georgia QB **JT Daniels** earned the Maxwell Award Player of the Week following the Dawgs' 31-24 win over Mississippi State. Daniels (#18, So., Irving, Calif.) made his Georgia debut and shredded MSU for 401 yards and four TD's (both career highs) while posting a career-best efficiency rating at 197.1. He became the first Bulldog since Aaron Murray in 2013 to throw for more than 400 yards in a game. Alabama QB **Mac Jones**' fine season continues heading into this weekend's Iron Bowl. Through 11 starts following last week's 63-3 rout of Kentucky, Jones (#10, Jr., Jacksonville, Fla.) has surpassed the marks of predecessors Tua Tagovailoa and Jalen Hurts in the same time frame. Jones is the only player of the three to eclipse the 400-yard mark at least once across his first 11 starts and is averaging 327.1 yards per game across that stretch that also leads the trio. Jones is on the cusp of an SEC record with his three 400-yard passing games. The league's single-season mark for 400-yard passing games is four which has been accomplished three times in SEC history – Tim Couch (1998), Johnny Manziel (2013) and Joe Burrow (2019).

Outland Trophy – nation's most outstanding interior lineman

For a same-screen look at some of the nation's finest linemen, take a glance at Saturday's game in Champaign, Ill., where five Watch List members are on the Big Ten's top two rushing teams going at it for the Illibuck Trophy. Five games into the Big Ten schedule Illinois is the B1G's second-best rushing team at 222.4 yards per game behind right tackle **Alex Palczewski** (#63, Sr., Mount Prospect, Ill.) and left guard **Kendrick Green** (#53, Jr., Peoria, Ill.), the highest-rated guard in the Big Ten and No. 3 in the nation on a line PFF grades as the top returning

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O-line in the Big Ten. Ohio State's dynamic offense starts up front with the trio of right guard **Wyatt Davis**, left tackle **Thayer Munford** and center **Josh Myers**. Davis (#52, Jr., Bellflower, Calif.) is a returning second-team FWAA All-American, and Myers (#71, Jr., Miamisburg, Ohio) and Munford (#75, Sr., Cincinnati, Ohio) have been consistent starters going back 20 games that form the O-line nucleus to an offense that is averaging 45.2 points per game, just under the school-record mark of 46.9 set just last year. Hat tip to North Texas DT **Dion Novil** (#97, Sr., Abilene, Texas), who racked up 5.0 TFL's, a sack, a season-high eight tackles (seven solos) and forced two fumbles in a 27-17 win over Rice. The Mean Green held Rice to 49 rushing yards.

Paul Hornung Award – most versatile player in college football

Six offensive players and return specialists who combined for 88 touches for 1,169 yards and 12 TD's make up this week's Paul Hornung Award Honor Roll. Western Michigan WR/RS **D'Wayne Eskridge** (#1, Sr., Bluffton, Ind.) headlines the group after a 212-yard receiving day on four catches with three TD's in a 52-44 win over Central Michigan. Eskridge had TD receptions of 33, 72 and 85 yards, returned two kickoffs for 41 yards and recovered two CMU onside kicks late in the game. Texas State WR/RS **Jeremiah Haydel** (#3, Sr., Houston, Texas) had 11 touches four different ways for 193 all-purpose yards and a TD in a 47-45 win over Arkansas State. Haydel caught four passes for 94 yards, carried once, returned two punts for 28 yards, three kickoffs for 78 yards and accounted for five first downs in the win. N.C. State RB/RS **Zonovan Knight** (#7, So., Bailey, N.C.) touched the ball 19 times three different ways and scored two TD's in a win over No. 21 Liberty. Knight had 14 carries for 94 yards and caught five passes for 34 yards. He returned two kickoffs and accounted for seven first downs. Central Michigan WR/RS **Kalil Pimpleton** (#88, Jr., Muskegon, Mich.) had 14 touches and scored four times in the loss to Western Michigan. Pimpleton had seven carries for 107 yards and three TD's, caught three passes for 42 yards, scored a two-point conversion, completed a pass for 30 yards and returned two punts. Florida WR/RS **Kadarius Toney** (#1, Sr., Mobile, Ala.) had 11 touches for 191 all-purpose yards and a TD in the Gators' 38-17 win over Vanderbilt. Toney caught six passes for 107 yards, returned three kickoffs for 74 yards, had a punt return for seven yards and accounted for four first downs. North Texas RB/RS **Deandre Torrey** (#3, Sr., Gautier, Miss.) touched the ball 23 times four different ways, scoring once in a 27-17 win over Rice. Torrey ran 19 times for 102 yards and a TD, caught two passes and had four kickoff and punt returns to finish with 158 total yards and six first downs gained.

Paycom Jim Thorpe Award – nation's best defensive back

Oregon safety **Jordan Happle** (#32, Sr., Portland, Ore.) made a career-high 11 tackles and returned an interception 58 yards for a TD on the final play of the first half in a win over UCLA. Happle's 58-yard pick-six was the Ducks' longest since 2017 and the longest at Autzen Stadium since 2011. He is one of six FBS players with double-digit tackles and a pick-six in the same game this season, and the first Oregon player to do it since 2010. Pitt safety **Damar Hamlin** (#3, Sr., McKees Rocks, Pa.) played both safety spots in the Panthers' 47-14 win over Virginia Tech, compiling a game-high 11 tackles amid several key plays. Hamlin twice had solo tackles on Hokie fourth-down plays.

Ray Guy Award – nation's best punter

The Augusta Sports Council announced LSU's **Zach Von Rosenberg** as its Punter of the Week. Von Rosenberg (#38, Sr., Zachary, La.) pinned five of his seven punts inside the Arkansas 10-yard line, four of which came in the second half downed at the 9, 5, 8 and 7-yard lines. For the game, Von Rosenberg averaged 48.9 yards on seven punts with a long of 61 yards and without a return. It's the second time this year Von Rosenberg has claimed the honor, matching his honor against Mississippi State in the season opener. Von Rosenberg is currently second in the SEC and No. 5 in the nation with a 47.5 average on 29 punts. He's the SEC leader with 18 punts downed inside the 20 and tied for the SEC lead in punts of 50 yards or more with 13. The other members of Ray's 4 this week were **Lucas Dean** of UTSA, **John Haggerty** of WKU and **Tommy Heatherly** of FIU.

Rimington Trophy – nation's premier center

The top four teams the initial College Football Playoff rankings each have outstanding centers worthy of All-America consideration. It will be a hard choice who to award the Rimington Trophy to, and even to select only two of the four on this list. Top-ranked Alabama has **Landon Dickerson** (#69, Sr., Hickory, N.C.), who is guiding an offense up front that has scored 35 or more points in 20 consecutive games heading into Saturday's Iron Bowl. That's the longest streak of its kind in NCAA history. 'Bama and Dickerson just torched the SEC's 4th-best defense last week for 509 yards. Second-ranked Notre Dame has a rare sophomore starter in **Zeke Correll** (#52, So., Cincinnati, Ohio). Correll is pulling extra duty in game minutes up front, as the Irish have won the time of possession comparison in seven of eight games this year and held the ball for 40:59 in a win at Pitt. Clemson, ranked third, has flourished with veteran linemen the past few year but first-time starter **Cade Stewart** (#62, Gr., Six Mile, S.C.) has been sharp over the ball in all eight starts. The Tigers have given up only 13 sacks this season. Clemson holds a 131-48 edge over its opponents in sacks during its 36-2 run since 2018, by far the top differential in the country during that time. And what of fourth-ranked Ohio State and center **Josh Myers** (#71, Jr., Miamisburg, Ohio). Myers guides an offense that leads the Big Ten in scoring (45.3 ppg), total offense (535.3 ypg) and rushing offense (233.3 ypg). The extra time Myers is giving Fields has led to a 79 percent completion rate

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for an offense averaging 45.2 points per game.

Walter Camp Award – nation’s most outstanding player

Kent State QB **Dustin Crum** earned the award’s Offensive Player of the Week after throwing for three TD’s and running for two others in the Golden Flash’s 69-35 win over Akron. In helping keep the Wagon Wheel in back-to-back seasons for the first time since 2012, Crum (#7, Sr., Grafton, Ohio) became the first player in Kent State history to throw for three TD’s and run for two others, and it’s just the fifth time in program history that any player accounted for five TD’s. He completed his first 17 passes and finished 22-for-25 for 348 yards and the three TD’s. He added 104 more yards and the two TD’s on the ground and his 452 total yards are good for third all-time in the school record book. Kent State is 3-0 for the first time since 1958 and plays at 3-0 Buffalo on Saturday. The National Defensive Player of the Week went to Tulsa LB **Zaven Collins** (#23, Jr., Hominy, Okla.), who becomes the first Tulsa player to earn the weekly honor since 2005. Collins had a game-high and season-best 15 tackles (eight solos), 0.5 TFL’s and an interception that won the game, a 96-yard pick-six in overtime that sent the No. 25 Golden Hurricane to a 30-24 win over Tulane. Tulsa scored 21 points in the fourth quarter and nine more in overtime that kept it undefeated (5-0) in AAC play. He had an interception a week prior against SMU that killed the Mustangs’ comeback attempt with 1:23 left. Collins’ four interceptions are tied for third nationally and are tops among linebackers. His 10.5 TFL’s are tied for 14th in the nation.

Wuerffel Trophy – exemplary community service and academic achievement

The Wuerffel Trophy’s nomination list from college football’s Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) includes some notable returning players from the 2019 semifinalists, including **Teton Saltes**, an offensive tackle at New Mexico, and **Sam Ehlinger**, a quarterback at Texas. Also back on the list are 2019 nominees **Michael Saffell** (C, California), **Tyriq Harris** (DE, Charlotte), **Brady White** (QB, Memphis), **Zach McCloud** (LB, Miami), **Mac Brown** (P, Ole Miss), **Kobe Jones** (DE, Mississippi State), **Ben Stille** (DL, Nebraska) and **Brian Ankersen** (C, South Alabama). The complete list of the nominees is at wuerffeltrophy.org.

